COMMENTARY

Must society redefine its meaning of matrimony?

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Background: Even after Gov. Roy Romer's veto Monday of HB1291, which sought to ban same-sex marriages, the debate is far from over. The bill — and others like it nationwide — have come partly in response to a court case pending in Hawaii. Three gay couples are suing that state to force recognition of their marriage. Some state policy makers, including some in Colorado, worry that the U.S. Constitution's "full faith and credit clause" will require recognition of same-sex marriages, if such unions win approval in Hawaii.

At issue: Will all states have to honor same-sex marriages performed in Hawaii if courts rule for the gay couples? What sort of financial and legal benefits, like joint tax returns and insurance benefits, should homosexual couples be entitled to? If same-sex couples are allowed to marry, will government be forced to acknowledge other unconventional unions, like polygamy?

The quandary: Should states be forced to recognize same-sex unions if they offend public values? Is it discriminatory to deny two people of the same sex a marriage license? Finally, how far should — or could — government become involved in personal relationships?

What's government's role?

The cry for same-sex marriage comes from a claim of discrimination. You hear things like homosexuals can't visit their dying mates. That's a bunch of malarkey because through contractual arrangements, you can prepare for those situations under current law. Anybody can make those kinds of arrangements. Homosexuals can enter into lifelong agreements; they can make wills; they can name beneficiaries under their insurance.

When you remove the boundaries of marriage and you redefine it as any sharing, caring people caring for each other — and you accommodate all the orientations that are out there so there's no group that can claim discrimination — then anything goes. This is definitely a watershed issue in terms of where we are headed as a society.

— Will Perkins
Colorado For Family Values
Colorado Springs

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GAY COUPLES WANT equal recognition of their relationships. For a couple that's been together for many years, there are problems with deathbed access, for instance, with visitation — someone sometimes has to make a decision to pull the plug. Even if they have arranged contracts and wills, it's possible for a family member to come in and usurp the wishes of the person who's dying or is very ill. So, there's a question about the legal rights of the long-term partner.

The founding fathers certainly represented the majority view at the time they formulated the Constitution, but they also realized that the minority had to be protected from the majority.

— Frank Whitworth
Ground Zero
Colorado Springs

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WHY SHOULD YOU or the government care if the two men next door want to get married? You shouldn't, and neither should the government.

Why should you or the government care if the man and woman across the street want to get divorced? You shouldn't, and neither should the government.

If it's family values you want, gay marriage delivers. It encourages stable relationships, two-parent households and long-term commitment. Gay activists say it also would do everything from lowering the risk of AIDS to easing alcohol problems to eliminating the social pressure on closet gays to marry heterosexuals, which they say would lower divorce rates.

Most of all, it would provide self-esteem to people who feel discriminated against. It also would be the fair thing to do.

— Michael Gartner
Ames (Iowa) Daily Tribune
Gannett News Service

Is marriage the answer?

Underlying the homosexuals' quest is a fundamental mental misunderstanding of marriage. Biblically, it is a lifelong commitment before God between a man and woman who were charged with the commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply." And just as God blesses the marital relationship, society invests in it by granting the couple certain financial and legal benefits. Why?

Because matrimony is likely to produce a greater good, namely children, which are necessary for any society's existence. We value children so much that we encourage married couples to bring them into the world by granting them tax breaks, insurance benefits and legal protections.

The assumption of procreation remains the single reason for granting benefits to married couples. But homosexuals, clouded by their inability to produce offspring, see marriage only as a reservoir of financial perks that they have yet to tap. And while they look to the advances of biotechnology as a remedy to their inability, nothing in that field can substitute for the miracle of natural conception. . . . If we expunge the assumption of procreation from the marital formula, polygamists will darken the doorsteps of every Las Vegas-type preacher in America. We will have no reason to prevent incestuous marriages, and marriage as an institution will be rendered meaningless.

— Martin Mawyer
Christian Action Network

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GAYS HAVE SEVERAL good reasons for wanting the security and legal and social recognition of marriage.

They want the legal and financial benefits that come with marriage: Social Security and pension benefits. The health insurance benefits. Tax advantages. Inheritance rights. The rights to share in health decisions, to visit partners in hospitals and jails. Clear parental rights. Bereavement leave when a partner dies. For many homosexuals, the primary yearning for marriage is simply a desire for lasting, legal commitment and a marital status that testifies to their love before all the world. . . . These rights and benefits can be provided by legalizing what is now awkwardly called "domestic partnerships," or publicly committed loving unions. But expanding the concept of domestic partnerships and pushing their acceptance by employers, government and society would help. And it would not dilute the sanctity of marriage, as the world has generally understood it for millennia.

— Joan Beck
Chicago Tribune

Is it really all about politics?

Pat Buchanan has made the same-sex marriage issue his own through his fervent opposition and has only reinforced, among gay Republicans, the anti-gay message they heard in 1992. The fear among gays is that the visceral reactions that same-sex marriage invokes may lead to an even bigger debacle than the debate over whether gays could openly serve in the military. And that any resulting public outcry could have broader social and political implications for the lives of gays and lesbians.

— Delia M. Rios
Newhouse News Service

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THE BACKLASH AGAINST gay marriage ultimately will backfire. Voters still uneasy with the notion of recognizing gay relationships tend to be even less comfortable with political attacks on gay people. And slick packaging isn't enough to sell prejudice to most of the nation.

— Deb Price
The Detroit News

STATE

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OUR VOICE
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end of the county Republican
rty — always there with
ded advice or just a word of
pport," said County Chairman
o Gardner.
Schuck, who once sought the
publican nomination for gov-
nor, has mentored many local
P candidates and promoted
merous conservative issues
d causes.

Banker enters
easurer's race: Longtime
al resident and banker Carl
nner has announced his candi-
cy for El Paso County
asurer.
Donner said his more than 30
ars in the financial industry,
st recently as vice president
d senior trust officer of Bank
e Colorado, makes him a capa-
candidate to invest taxpayer
nds.
"My primary goal will be to
erate a professional organiza-
n with the utmost in sound,
udent strategy," he said.
Donner, who earned a bache-
's degree from Williams Col-
e, has lived in Colorado
rings since 1979, when he
ned First National Bank of
lorado Springs. Donner has
ved on numerous boards and
anizations. Among them:
es Peak United Way,
thritis Foundation, Rotary
b, Pioneers Museum Founda-
n, School District 12 and the

Bill funding schools starts legislative trek

Gazette Telegraph
and news services

DENVER — El Paso County schools would get modest funding increases under a $2.9-billion, school spending bill that began its journey through the General Assembly on Monday.

The measure was scheduled for a final vote in the House later this week.

The bill earmarks $66.2 million more in state aid than was provided last year for Colorado's 176 school districts and 640,000 students. Most of the increase will go toward accommodating 1,850 additional preschoolers in the state.

Colorado's schools are financed primarily by local property taxes and money from the state's general fund.

Colorado Springs School District 11 had long complained that under previous funding formulas, it did not get its fair share of state money to run its schools. In 1994, the school-finance law was rewritten, and the result boosted D-11's appropriation. Under the current bill, D-11 and most of El Paso County's school districts would receive an increase in per-pupil funding of from 2.5 percent to 3 percent.

Norma Anderson, R-Lakewood, the usual sponsor for the annual bill, started with a per-pupil minimum of $4,200, a $64 increase over last year. But as the bill advanced through the House Education Committee to the House Appropriations Committee and onto the floor, the amount grew to $4,305, which would be $169 more than last year.

As a side issue, the House also approved a proposal by Rep. Doug Dean, R-Colorado Springs, to prohibit school districts from hiring contract lobbyists with public dollars.

Court OKs use of lottery money to pay off prison construction costs

Gazette Telegraph
and news services

DENVER — About $22 million in lottery money can be used to pay off prison construction rather than to build parks.

That's the upshot of a Colorado Supreme Court ruling Monday that settled a dispute between the state's General Assembly and the attorney general.

But the ruling is limited; it won't open up the old debate about whether lottery money was being spent the way voters wanted it to be — on the outdoors.

When voters passed Amendment 8 in 1992, they reserved most lottery proceeds for parks, wildlife, outdoor recreation and open space. But a clause in the amendment allowed a portion to be used — for a time — for debt reduction.

The deadline isn't up until 1998. There would be no dispute except that the state refinanced its prison-construction debt, boosting annual payments but shortening the time it would take to pay off the obligation. The General Assembly looked to the lottery for the additional money. The attorney general said no.

The high court sided with the Legislature. But Great Outdoors Colorado officials said the ruling will have no effect on their budget or any planned land purchases because they treated the $22 million as if it never existed.

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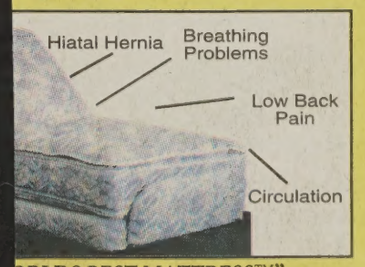

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